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ABSTRACT

Three papers considering multicultural art education work progressively through the problems inherent in an ethnographic approach to art education. The first paper, "A Color Conscious Art" (Nick Stanley), focuses on the construction of a serviceable philosophy for art in a multicultural society. Hidden cultural references in such an apparently value-free term as "color" are explored and two models of multicultural education are presented. In the first model, multicultural education is directed to minority ethnic groups using elements from students' own ethnic cultures. The author advocates a second model in which there is exploration of transcultural aspects of the arts, giving the student competence in multiple cultures. A technically based approach is suggested as a proper foundation for a wide-ranging art and design syllabus. The second paper, "The Missing Dimension" (Helga Loeb), addresses the problem of supplying a conceptual basis for curriculum work in ethnographically informed art and design education. Three key ideas are presented. The final paper, "Process, Object and Context" (Phil Slight), suggests an approach to the use of a wider cultural reference that assumes a double context. The first considers the original context of the art studied, while the second involves the new context within which this knowledge or awareness is handled. The document concludes that reference and attention to both contexts provide conceptual structures for experiencing in terms of the imaginative, the inventive, the aesthetic, and the emotional. (LH)

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Occasional Papers

VIII

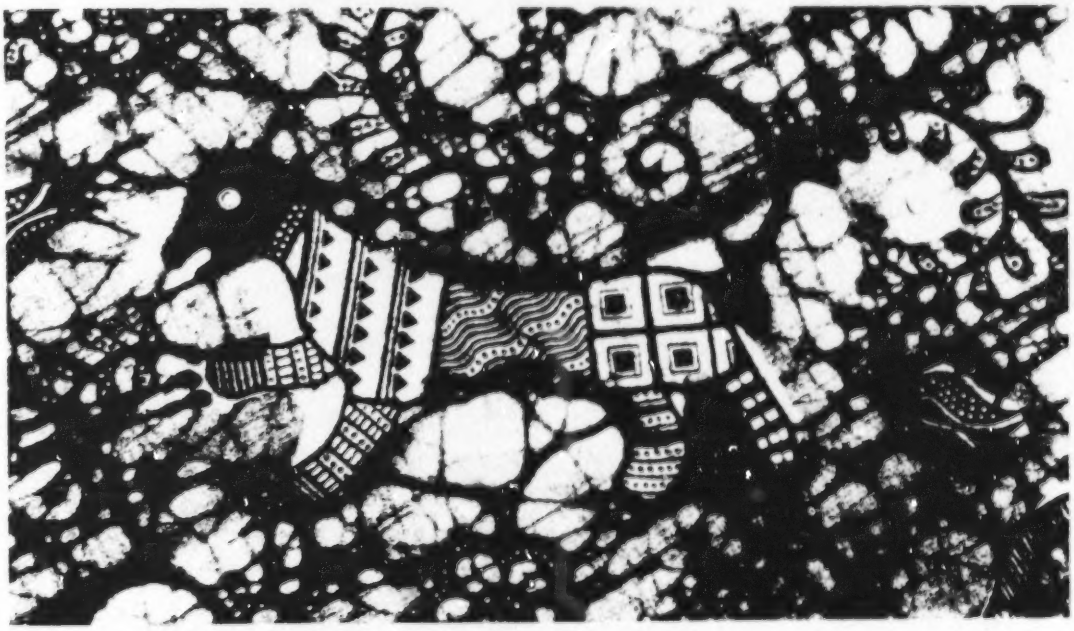
Extramural Division

School of Oriental and African Studies

University of London

THE VISUAL ARTS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

HELGA LOEB, PHIL SLIGHT and NICK STANLEY



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Cover: The front cover illustration is a detail from Dutch wax-resist cloth which is sold in West African markets.

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1983

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INTRODUCTION

The three papers that follow all derive from experience over a five year period of thinking and research largely in Birmingham but drawing on expertise from around the country and many places abroad. All three of us have been driven by the pressure of experience to work out our philosophy and our approach in response to practical events. These papers do not represent any fixed or finite conclusions. They are, in every sense, working papers. To underline this point we have refrained from wholesale retrospective revisions and we have retained the personal style of each piece. This introduction is offered to provide the context that these papers were given when originally delivered. Perhaps two kinds of reference might be worth considering here - firstly, the background to the project to which these papers often refer, and secondly, the way in which the papers are designed to hang together.

The project 'Ethnographic Resources for Art Education' was born of a desire to expand the art and design syllabus in schools and elsewhere to incorporate other cultural experiences not generally encountered in the European-focused curriculum. The objective was to get students and teachers to re-evaluate their own thinking and practice by examining the way people from different cultures and places approach the same or similar problems. The first topic we considered was ceramics on which we worked in 1979 and 1980 producing three booklets entitled *Ashanti and Hausa Pottery*, *Pottery from Peru* and *Pakistani Pottery*. The second phase dealt with dyed and printed fabrics, this time linking the transfer of ideas and process between different cultures through time, taking the dissemination of dyeing and printing from Java through Holland and on to West Africa. This set of booklets entitled *Dyed and Printed Textiles* was completed in 1982. The third phase (1982/83) was less technique-centred and more comparative, examining how different objects of similar form were/are employed by children and adults in a wide variety of cultures. The sets of booklets were entitled *Playthings as Art Objects* and incorporated sections on dolls, kites, playing cards and simple sound-making objects. In all three phases of the project we were fortunate in being able to employ research assistants who carried out research in some depth and prepared text for print. We formed a joint editorial board where we

faced the problems of stereotypic thinking, cultural bias (inevitably largely unconscious) and sheer ignorance. We do not pretend to have shaken off all of these fetters but we have of necessity had to consider other ideas abroad in the world of multicultural art education, and models other than our own. We have, for example, to reconsider the value of one of our underlying premises - the purpose of ethnography itself - and the possible bias it may contain, bidden or manifest.[1] An interesting and provocative model has come from development education which has stressed the importance of offering "opportunity for exploration of the concept of change in the lives of the people that performed or made the art forms".[2] These and other questions of fundamental philosophy continue to engage us. We are also influenced by the practical considerations of how these materials have fared in the classroom and how they could be made more effective. This last question is receiving a lot of our attention currently during our evaluation programme.

Where do these working papers fit into the picture painted above? They work progressively through the problems inherent in an ethnographic approach to art education from the general to the specific - though not simply from theory to practice - all three papers address both aspects in differing ways. The first paper takes as issue the contruction of a serviceable philosophy for art in a multicultural society. It attempts to chart a course between the reefs of specialist ethnic heritage studies and the well-intentioned cultural *pot-pourri*. The paper suggests a technically based approach as a proper foundation for a wide ranging art and design syllabus. The second paper tackles the problem of supplying a conceptual basis for curriculum work in ethnographically informed art and design education, which might be termed comparative art education. The paper goes on to spell out the key contributions such an approach might provide for art education. The last paper makes a basic distinction between practical work based on study of the original context of the art studied, whether historical or contemporary, contrasted with the second context in which, by means of imaginative and adaptive processes as well as nourished and stimulated by reference to wider resource materials, such art is resited in the British educational context. This raises afresh the central question that all three papers consider - the proper approach to inter- and intracultural understanding. Perhaps Ward Goodenough provides the most stringent test for such an approach when he remarks:

> "Good ethnography requires putting the ethnographer's stereotypes to tests that are similar, or at least

> equivalent, to those by which the society's members test the adequacy of their individual stereotypes of their fellow members".[3]

Art, we maintain, both in terms of tradition and imagination, is a central ingredient in a full ethnography, though we are often unsure how to bring the two together. We hope that the ideas and suggestions communicated in the following pages help bring alive Goodenough's propositions for the art and design agenda.

Nick Stanley, 1983.

NOTES

1. An article dealing with just this issue is written by Gavin Janjes in "The words about us", *Art Libraries Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter 1983, pp.14-22.
2. Aileen McKenzie *Report on a Course: Using Third World Art Forms for Creative Activities*, Oxfam Education Department, London, 1983, p.2.
3. W. E. Goodenough "Multiculturalism as the normal human experience", *Anthropology and Educational Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1976, p.5.

A COLOUR CONSCIOUS ART

Nick Stanley

The visual arts may with some justification claim to have pioneered cross-cultural study. There are through history and in many areas of the world innumerable examples of culture contact between peoples leading to the cross-fertilization and revitalization of art. On a narrower scale individual European artists have sought inspiration from other parts of the world. Paul Gauguin deliberately sought non-European sources, particularly in the field of colour. Gauguin is by no means an isolated example. Yet, despite such potential value, little part has been played by art in the development of multicultural education. This apparent paradox may perhaps be in some measure due to the fact that those involved in the teaching of art have remained unaware of the cultural premises from which they operate. I will stay with the example of colour to develop this point.

Paul Gauguin was involved in searching for a set of universal values - in his case colour values - which "were supposed to act directly upon the spectator's senses, and each spectator was expected to feel the same thing".[1] In this quest Gauguin was entering a field inhabited traditionally by artists but also by a subject of interest to physiologists and, more recently, anthropologists. Colour is obviously a topic of considerable interest to all concerned with interpersonal and intercultural understanding. How people perceive colour may suggest other categories of classification within a culture. Gauguin's approach to symbolic colour presumed a universal colour theory. This approach has more recently been adopted by Berlin and Kay in their *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution.*[2] Whilst there is general agreement that "Colour discrimination is probably the same for all human populations, irrespective of language",[3] there is serious disagreement with Berlin and Kay's evolutionary model of colour discrimination because, as Conklin argues "the manner in which different languages classify the million different colours which every normal individual can discriminate differ".[4] Differences may not be only intercultural, but even intracultural. Conklin reports that Hanunoo men excel in distinguishing fine gradations in reds and greys whilst women have a similar acuity in the range of blues.[5] A growing

body of anthropological work reinforces the thesis "that basic terms of the color lexicon function as a sort of perceptual shorthand for discriminations that are always more complicated".[6] There are, in short, a host of non-colorimetric aspects which may impinge on our colour discriminations. "We have to allow somehow that terms can 'translate' without having the same meaning".[7] Slowly we are learning how we and others perceive and categorize the world about us.[8] Inevitably the lessons from anthropology will come to have a bearing not only on topics such as colour but also craft, design and even basic mark-making.

Gauguin, of course, could hardly have been expected to have this perspective as he set out for Tahiti and the Marquesas - he had, in fact a very clear idea what his primitive paradise would be like before he got there.[9] However, we can now scarcely feign such naiveté. The study of colour leads us directly into considerations of cultures and their systems of colour classification. In turn these questions require us to consider the broader questions that confront those in the field of crosscultural or multicultural studies. It is, for example, not sufficient to state that "in, art history and music and dance, study can be made of African, Asian and Afro-American contributions".[10] To create a multicultural approach to an art curriculum we first have to establish the purpose of the exercise, the criteria of selection and the outcome envisaged. We have to argue not only for art objectives but for a particular conception of multicultural education. There is in the term 'multicultural' wide scope for possible misunderstanding which can be a source of confusion between those advocating it as well as welcome ammunition for those out of sympathy for any such approach. Essentially, those involved in constructing a multicultural curriculum have not made up their minds

> "whether the purpose of such education should be to confirm the child in a particular way of life or to give him independence within a wider, transcultural form of life"[11]

Two models of multicultural education may be derived from this distinction. The first, which I will call 'model A' sees multicultural education as directed to minority ethnic groups - that is what "confirming a child in a particular way of life" is shorthand for. The second model, 'model B', is transcultural and universalist in orientation.

In an analytic view of the meaning of the term multiculturalism Robert Jeffcoate describes multicultural education as either 'transmissionist' or transformationist. Transmissionists hope to retain in education

> "content which is derived from the cultural 'stock' of the minority ethnic groups which now form an important part of our educational clientele"[12].

Transformationists aim to provide a means by which we can *all* overstep our cultural myopia and gain access to world knowledge. Giles makes a similar point when he remirds us that

> "a distinction needs to be made between education for cultural pluralism based on ethnic and racial diversity, and multicultural education which promotes competence in multiple cultures"[13].

What I call model A lies behind a lot of North American approaches to ethnic studies - elements from the students' own ethnic mother culture are brought into the school curriculum to provide a sense of worth.[14] Multicultural education is in this sense

> "an educational concept, that, translated into curriculum and teachers' attitudes, recognises, accepts, and allows people from all ethnic and cultural groups to maintain and be proud of their cultural background.[15]

Despite the obviously good intentions displayed in such a statement, the ethnic heritage approach to multicultural education has recently suffered a bad press, largely because it rests upon the assumption that all cultures enjoy equal respect - a point which is hotly contended by those who see racism as a pervasive force in daily life and affecting teachers and pupils alike. Maureen Stone, whose book *The Education of the Black Child in Britain* is subtitled "The myth of multicultural education", goes further and attributes to multicultural education decidedly negative qualities. She maintains that

> "the role of multicultural education falls within the scope of the compensatory model which essentially attempts to compensate educationally 'disadvantaged' children through the development of special education projects".[16]

The purpose of multicultural education for minority peoples - to increase their self-esteem and self-concept preparatory to competing with others on equal terms - is in Stone's eyes, a cruel deception, shunting the poorly taught into secondary and unprestigious studies, confirming all manner of stereotypes. Stone is not a lone voice. The Rampton Committee in its initial report makes a special point of warning that I think it well worth repeating especially in the context of art teaching. The *Report* states

> "M[illegible]y teachers feel that West Indians are unlikely to achieve in academic terms but may have high expectations

> of their potential in areas such as sport, dance, drama, and art. If these particular skills are unduly emphasised there is a risk of establishing a view of West Indian children that may become a stereotype and teachers may be led to encourage their pupils at the expense of their academic studies.[17]

Even if such dangers are avoided there still remain substantial problems in providing ehtnic studies in the curriculum. For example, in the art curriculum there may be a strong case for incorporating the arts of West Africa in a school with a large number of students of West Indian origin. If a specialist art curriculum is created for this group - a solution advocated by some[18] - there are two distinct but interconnected consequences that may well follow. (If, for purposes of exemplification I stay with one culture, I am doing so only for the sake of simplicity - as I maintain the same consequences occur for any distinct culture). Firstly, there is the problem of teacher competence - to know the arts and crafts of West Africa is to have become immersed in a fairly deep understanding of a number of civilizations, their interrelationship, the impact of European colonization, and hopefully, post colonial developments in the arts. The task will involve an appreciation of history, religion, social and cultural patterns and a feel for the rhythm of daily life. This is a tall order. I must stress however that it is certainly not without the competence of an intelligent and sensitive individual. I do not want to suggest, as some cultural autonomists do, that another person's culture is incommunicable. However, the process of communication may be complex. William Styron's novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* drew a lot of hostile comment because it purported to be the confession of a black slave insurrectionary leader written by a white middle-class author. The storm surrounding the book was not, I suggest, really to do with the issue of understanding another's culture, but about the appropriateness of such a depiction. The question of 'appropriateness' confronts the teacher seeking to develop an ethnic heritage programme in the art syllabus - or any other area of the curriculum. If we assume that the teacher is both intelligent and sensitive she or he may well raise the level of cultural awareness and ethnic pride. Paradoxically, the more successful the teacher is in achieving such an objective, the more dissonant may be the result. Black studies and black power issues, as recent authors have cogently argued, are logically related.[19] Put simply, the art teacher may unwittingly enter an educational and political mine-field. Maybe teachers should be prepared to be courageous, but before they venture forth

they might perhaps reflect that as individuals become proud of their ethnic heritage they may also come to resent their being taught it by a teacher not sharing that culture. I am not here precluding the gifted teacher from teaching ethnic heritage studies in the arts or elsewhere. What I have been suggesting is that there are very distinct issues that the teacher should first consider which relate to teacher competence and appropriateness.

The above observations might be construed as a warning off the teaching of ethnic heritage studies. I do think that these studies are, indeed, very important for the development of the individual's sense of worth, particularly in societies which manifestly do not treat individuals equally. I do think, however, that the most logical starting point for such studies is within the culture itself. This is not to advocate anything new. Different cultures, different religions have asserted this in Britain for a long time. Some cultures demand specific provision of a separate schooling, others require partial withdrawal from the school's curriculum whilst others are content to provide additional teaching outside school hours.

Does what I have said above mean that I am counselling art teachers and others to abandon multicultural approaches to art? Of course not. I fully concur with the Schools Council's policy statement

> "All involved in education .... need to consider the relevance of a multi-ethnic society to the education of all children, and to adopt policy objectives and give clear guidance on the ways in which these can be achieved".[20]

What I wish to assert is that this may best be done within the context of what I have described as a 'model B' approach to multiculturalism - that is, an exploration of the transcultural aspects of the arts, giving the student competence in multiple cultures. Toward this end I wish to advocate that the teacher and student start from the art process and technique and work outwards. I suggest this approach because it keeps in the mind both the relationship between the technical and aesthetic aspects on the one hand, and the cultural context on the other. This is not always an easy equation even in the seemingly neutral area of the plastic arts. I am making an initial assumption which requires some considerable arguing that we are in a position to justify our selection from one particular culture rather than from another. We would do well to bear in mind Herskowitz's warning that "there is no way to play the game of making judgements across cultures except with loaded dice".[21] Again the question

of competence and appropriateness arise.

Many art teachers who have Muslim students face the situation that their students' concept of art may have different parameters and priorities to their own - a most obvious case is that concerning figurative representation. What is at issue here is the evaluation that the teacher makes of how to resolve the situation, and this in turn will reveal something of the teacher's opinion of that culture.[22] The strictly brought-up Muslim may find him or herself in a potentially conflicting situation in the art room. This is, I think, the most difficult cultural question that occurs in multicultural art education though this is not that uncommon a problem in other areas of the curriculum. What is at stake is the value we attach to to the beliefs and practices of another culture. We may discover that the more we know of a culture the less sympathy we have for its values. If Charles Lindholm's description of the Swat Pukhtun people of Northern Pakistan is reliable then we are not likely to celebrate a culture where emnity between cousins *(tarbur)* spills over into institutionalized conflict between husand and wife, father and son.[23]

I want to suggest, in line with the Schools Council advice, that we propose policy objectives and give clear guidance on the ways in which they can be achieved. The policy that I advocate is the creation of competence in the student to reach out and grasp materials from other cultures and be in a position to evaluate them in a broad context. The intention is that this policy will break down stereotypic thinking and promote an enquiring mind. The means by which this policy is effected are two-fold: a multicultural art education should be conceived of as a technical education combined with or informed by a critical perspective, both aspects having equal weight. Technical education as a term I take to mean a concern with products and processes of the cultures we are examining, and I employ it to emphasize the fact that we can justify the explorations we are undertaking in terms explainable and acceptable within the art and design curriculum. The reasons we might wish to study West African pottery are not only to celebrate two thousand years of craftwork,[24] though this is of itself a sufficient reason. We may also be looking at how the pottery was made, glazed and fired - technical questions - and we will certainly compare such traditions with our own as well as other traditions from elsewhere. I would like additionally to recommend this approach as serving flexibly the needs of students from minority cultures. It permits them to hold a variable relationship between their own 'special' and the

dominant culture. West Indian children may wish to study West African pottery - they may, on the other hand, be more interested in the study of porcelain or in the pottery produced so engagingly by the Moche people of Peru. This technically based approach permits of personal choice and decision. The approach may also permit artists to draw upon two cultures simultaneously - as is done to great effect by artists like Saleem Arif.[25]

The technical approach does create one possible problem. If too narrow an approach is adopted the meaning of the objects may be lost. Let me exemplify with another object from the Americas. We may decide to study the Kachina doll produced by the Hopi people of northern Arizona as a visually interesting object of study. Unless we understand something of the doll's cultural history and original purpose we risk wrenching the object out of context and misunderstanding it. The Kachina doll is, as it happens, neither just a plaything nor is it akin to a juju. The doll represents an element in Hopi cosmology. The *tihu* (doll) acts as a reminder of the Kachina spirits and "bears a portion of the kachina spirit power, just as a child bears resemblance to its parents".[26] These spirits may also be impersonated by dancers who are masked. There is then in the doll that we first approached reference to a whole symbolic world - one which incidentally has a colour system of its own. For the Hopi yellow represents the north, blue-green the west, red the south, white the east and black the underworld.[27] It is necessary for the teacher and the taught to grasp some of the ethnographic reference if the formal qualities which we first sought are to come alive.

To demand of the teacher and the taught a double reference, keeping in mind both technical and universal characteristics (say, the use of colour in various societies) as well as the cultural depth (the significance of the Kachina) may seem a lot to ask, perhaps an insupportable burden for those who are not specially skilled or gifted. I do not think this to be the case. I am not asking for exceptional teachers of particular erudition. What is required is a change of outlook - and in many cases that has already happened. The good teacher often already reaches out to other cultures for examples and comparisons. What I had here sought to provide are some further thoughts on how this might be done more widely and to what purpose. I would like to think that once the teacher has faced the issues raised by multicultural education and considered them that she or he would be in a strong position to consider afresh the art

curriculum. To return to the title of the paper and the first example, I do not believe it makes much difference whether the teacher or student starts looking for comparative uses of colour in different societies or dwells on colour symbolism and usage in one or two cultures. In either case the study may well lead us to reconsider the concept of colour that we hold, tied as it tends to be to its chromatic qualities. If this is the case the art curriculum may well have to expand to take in non-colorimetric aspects - the parameters of the discipline itself may have to shift and accommodate. This would certainly represent an important development for the conception of the scope of art that we presently hold.

It may be apposite to add one final note. The title of this paper has an intentional ambiguity. 'Colour-consciousness' is a term normally reserved in usage to race relations. I have reappropriated the term to use for other purposes. But I have failed to strip it of its primary reference which it refuses to shed. I think that this further illustrates the importance to be attributed to the hidden cultural reference in such an apparently value-free term as colour, itself a central issue in art education.

NOTES

1. L. Alloway, Introduction to *Gauguin and the Decorative Style*, Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1966.
2. B. Berlin and P. Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969.
3. H. C. Conklin, "Hanunoo color categories", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11 (1955), 340.
4. Conklin, *loc cit.*, 340; M. Sahlins, "Colors and cultures", *Semiotica* 16:1 (1976), 3.
5. Conklin, *loc cit.*, 343.
6. J. Bousefield, "The world seen as a colour chart" in R. F. Ellen and D. Reason (eds.), *Classifications in Their Social Context*, Academic Press, 1979, p.207.
7. *ibid.*
8. See for example V. W. Turner, "Colour classification in Ndembu ritual: a problem of primitive classification" in M. Banton (ed), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Tavistock, 1966, pp. 47-84; and W. H. Whiteley "Colour word and colour values: the evidence from Gusii" in R. Horton and R. Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*, Faber, 1973, pp. 145-161.
9. "The Tahitians, happy inhabitants of the unexplored paradises of Oceania know only the sweet aspects of life. For them to live is to sing and to love". Gauguin to Emile Schuffenecker. Quoted in J. Rewald,

Post-Impressionism from Van Gogh to Gauguin, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1962, p.449.

10. D. W. Hicks, *Minorities: A Teachers' Research Book for the Multi-Ethnic Curriculum*, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1981, p.53.

11. P. Walkling, "The idea of a multicultural curriculum", *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 14:1 (1980), p. 88.

12. Walkling, *loc. cit.*, p.87.

13. R. Giles, *The West Indian Experience in British Schools*, Methuen, 1977, p. 161.

14. The Ethnic Heritage Studies Program has been federally funded in the USA and resulted in a variety of curriculum units in different states. The Pennsylvania project TIES (Training individual ethnic sources) is one such example. See the TIES books grades 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12. Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Curriculum Services, Harrisburg, PA, 1979.

15. D. M. Gollnick, F. H. Klassen and J. Yff, *Multicultural Education and Ethnic Heritage in the United States*, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D.C., 1976, p.1.

16. M. Stone, *The Education of the Black Child in Britain*, Fontana, 1981, p.98.

17. A. Rampton (chairman), *West Indian Children in our Schools*, HMSO, 1981, p.13.

18. P. Bartle-Jenkins, "Paintings by West Indian Children in Avon" in *Projects and Prospects: Art in a Multicultural Society*, Department of Art Education, Birmingham Polytechnic, 1981, p.17.

19. F. Dhondy, P. Beese and L. Hassan, *The Black Explosion in British Schools*, Race Today Publications, 1982.

20. A. Little and R. Willey, "Multi-ethnic education: the way forward", *Schools Council Pamphlet*, No. 18 (1981), p. 30.

21. M. Herskowitz quoted in E. Hatch, *Culture and Morality: The Relativity of Values in Anthropology*, Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 8.

22. See J. Harris, "A paradox of multicultural societies", *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 16:2 (1982), pp.223-233, for a provocative account of the problem.

23. C. Lindholm, *Generosity and Jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan*, Columbia, University Press, 1982.

24. *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria: Legacy of Two Thousand Years*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1982.

25. Saleem Arif in "Between Two Cultures" exhibition, Barbican Centre, London, 1982; and in his "Images from Dante's Inferno", Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, 1983. See also P. Wright, "Saleem Arif's Inferno", *Artrage* 2, February 1983, pp. 5-6.

26. B. Wright, "Spirit dolls with Hopi power", *Arizona Magazine*, 8:28 (1977), quoted by Y. Brierley in *Playthings as Art Objects: Dolls*, Ethnographic Resources for Art Education, Department of Art Education, Birmingham Polytechnic, 1983, p. 9.

27. Brierley, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

THE MISSING DIMENSION

Helga Loeb

Wisdom is not received, it is acquired. In each person's mind the fundamental concepts of the world have to be constructed. This is a tenet of educational theory, but it has not received much attention in art and design education. Construction - yes; it fills and spills over from art and craft-rooms everywhere, but fundamental concepts - no. Specialist art teachers might claim that art represents a special form of 'knowing', but, immersed in the making of images and objects, they are seldom able to articulate how such understanding comes about. Yet, in the process of concept formation the very nature of the subject offers the opportunity to make visible and understood fugitive and ephemeral ideas which come and, too often, go in the flux of teaching and learning. Other disciplines call on visualization as an aid, but it is primarily a technique used in the service of another objective. In art, craft and design the peculiarly concentrated understanding derived from the linked acts of seeing and giving form is central.

We owe to J. S. Bruner a model of how experience comes to be represented in the mind: thought is rooted in physical activity, represented in imagery, and distilled by abstraction in symbolic form. To deal in this sequence with all the concepts that have to be grasped by the pupil would surely lack both the economy and power that Bruner requires of instruction; but it is appropriate for any educator to consider what concepts result from any particular area of study. Art education is in a particularly favourable position to contribute to the development of mature judgment since its contents and procedures encompass Bruner's three modes of representation quite naturally. Art teachers have a responsibility, therefore, for helping their pupils to use iconic representation as a component of symbolic thought - to link making to meaning.

In the case of our present concerns, sometimes the concept to be learned will be specifically located within art, craft or design: for example, techniques of shaping and firing examined in the context of different geographical and economic settings.[1] At other times attention may be given to a concept of universal significance expressed in visual form, as

demonstrated by Feldman[2] in four sculptures of pregnant women - by Degas (c.1896-1911), Epstein (1931), Picasso (1950) and a Fertility Fetish from the lower Congo. Thinking required in this instance would refer to pregnancy as life experience, the images as representations of that experience and the abstraction of certain salient ideas - weight, distortion of shape, the woman's response to her condition. Comparison of the sculptures *is* possible in relation to an *identified* concept, and as it happens, the Fetish seems to possess the greatest expressive power. The point I wish to stress is that the judgments involved are not global, about cultures, but specific. The argument relies on the organization of evidence, and that is what education is about - not a branch of special education called 'multicultural', but education as such.

What concepts should a multicultural approach to art education promote? The following suggestions may indicate some criteria by which teachers could judge how certain areas of the syllabus could be brought into sharper focus, perhaps by expansion.

1. The interaction of environmental needs and resources, techniques and cultural forms.

2. The discovery of the pupil's own creativity and competence, as a basis for acknowledging and valuing the creativity and competence of others. (An example from our *Playthings as Art Objects*[3] pack might be the act of making and playing a sound-producing object which would in turn set a standard for the appreciation of one of the traditional objects described in the text.)

3. The characteristics of materials, and sensitivity to their properties and qualities, e.g. hardness, brittleness, pliability, and their suitability for carving, moulding, hardening by fire.

4. The characteristics of human activity. Artists and crafsmen may be seen in the context of point 3 above as having certain qualities and predispositions, and these, too, become media of artistic expression. An example of this is the human propensity to create symbolic transitional forms, as in imaginative play which provides a bridge between the here and now and some other realm of the spirit or imagination. This is the core concept in the *Playthings as Art Objects* pack.[4]

5. The qualities of objects in terms of aesthetic content, function, and craftsmanship seen as responses to the problems posed by the needs of a society, or the perceptions of individuals. The exotic aspects of certain artefacts from strange cultures are therefore tempered by the identification of problems and solutions. Seen in this light the object becomes a means of communication.

Nothing I have said so far falls outside the range of the normal art/craft/design curriculum, and could perhaps be regarded as Comparative Art education. In this sense a reference to Comparative Religion might prove useful, in providing a more familiar parallel. Children are nurtured *in* the religion of their family by induction to its customs, practice and belief - as they are encouraged to make art in the schools of their community. To learn *about* religions, as systems by which human beings order their lives, is to adopt a wider perspective. It is to attempt to interpret and understand the customs and practices of others, without necessarily adopting them as one's own; hence the parallel with multi-cultural reference in art education.

Three key ideas in an ethnographic approach to art education would, however, introduce a change of emphasis. The first is to use ethnographic information to emphasize *common needs, common problems and a comparison of solutions.* For example, an important concept in many societies is that of Divine Kingship. A fascinating area of study opens up when we consider how this idea has been variously interpreted and represented - from the monolithic heads and half-length figures of Easter Island, to the faces on the Towers of Angkor, compared with earlier Egyptian royal statues and the Great Sphinx,[5] and perhaps with European painting and sculpture.

The second key concept is the acceptance, indeed *celebration of diversity.* This may be especially well learned in a field where there are no 'correct' answers; in art diversity is the essence of the subject matter itself.

A third essential objective must surely be to strengthen an understanding of how *cultural influences spread and interact.* Most people learn something at school about trade routes, or Roman roads, or the migration of peoples in search of security, space, glory, adventure or wealth, as the case may be. In the arts and crafts such information can become personally significant when changes in techniques are experienced by means of actual, physical involvement in processes and materials, leading to changes in style being recognized as part of a whole constellation of cultural influences. The example of the characteristic blue and white colour scheme which we in the West associate with Chinese porcelain is a case where such influences may be acknowledged through attention to process. The colour is the result of new techniques introduced to China during the Mongol conquest, and evolved under their rule by a marriage of

Chinese and Iranian processes and materials. "China provided the porcelain, ... Iran the cobalt-oxide medium used for decorating Near Eastern earthenware. This was the most easily controllable medium for underglaze decorations, and was at first used in China for motifs of an Iranian cast on porcelain vessels fashioned like the metal work of the Mongols. During the Ming period the colour-scheme persisted, but *all traces of foreign influence were expunged* from the designs and Ming blue-white porcelain is as purely Chinese in decoration as in form".[6] The *Dyed and Printed Textiles* pack[7] similarly demonstrates an exchange of techniques and ideas between cultures. The evidence is in the objects, and the context is in history, geography, and the study of religions.

In conclusion, it might be useful to consider future developments. As we have seen, curriculum content can range across cultures in what might become a stimulating and productive extension of current practice. The research task is to provide examples and resources which are clearly presented in terms of artistic *and* social diversity. Of almost equal priority is the need to refine a style of communication which ensures a wide dissemination of such materials. Another important aspect is to monitor development and use of the materials in classrooms. The packs of ethnographic resources act as points of departure for a wide variety of lessons. Close scrutiny is needed of how they are used, and with what results. In this sensitive area the approach can be innovative, exciting, and celebratory. Or mishandled, albeit with good intentions, may lead to defensive attitudes towards 'multicultural' content. We are convinced, therefore, that our endeavours must justify themselves as beneficial practice in general arts education, and not as special pleading. More information is needed about how teachers adapt the materials to their particular needs; their contact with other subject specialists - we know already that they have been found useful in Social Studies and Home Economics; whether they have engendered extra-curricular activities and interests. All such initiatives will stand in some relationship to class composition, and teacher and pupil attitudes and perceptions. So far we have lacked the resources to undertake this evaluation as extensively as we would wish.

When all has been said and done, we shall have to accept the limitations on complete multicultural understanding. Honour and Fleming[8] put it well: "The arts of Africa, like those of Oceania and the American North-west, lose their all-important fourth dimension when uprooted and

and taken out of their ritual contexts - just as people living in urbanized and industrialized societies tend to lose their sixth sense". We believe that responding to art objects from other cultures through imaginative construction and personal interpretation begins to restore to them that fourth dimension which they lack as museum exhibits.

NOTES

1. Pottery Cultures Handbooks: *Ashanti and Hausa Pottery, Pottery from Peru, Pottery from Pakistan,* Birmingham Polytechnic.
2. E. B. Feldman, *Varieties of Visual Experience,* Harry N Abrams Inc., New York. p. 660.
3. Ethnographic Resources for Art Education. *Playthings as Art Objects.* Roy Upson *et al:* "Sound-Making Objects". 1983.
4. *Ibid.,* "Ideas and Resources", pp.1-3.
5. H. Honour and J Fleming, *A World History of Art,* Macmillan, U.K., 1982, p. 549.
6. *Ibid.,* p.415.
7. Ethnographic Resources for Art Education. *Dyed and Printed Textiles.*
8. Honour and Fleming, *ibid.,* p. 563.

PROCESS, OBJECT AND CONTEXT

Phil Slight

The making of, or responding to images and objects is common to all peoples. The endless variety of contexts in which this has and does happen presents us with our most important resource in education.

What exactly are these resources and how might they be used? We would probably agree that the spectrum of visual arts education in this country spans at various points in time both instrumental usage and the autonomous expressive elements. This learning in and about the arts takes place in a cultural context that both evolves and shifts with time and is modified by the complexity of reference and resources available. The choice of useful resources is enormous, and the challenge to make more than superficial reference to it is central to individual and social development. I would like to suggest an approach to the use of wider cultural reference that assumes a double context, which for clarity I will call the *first* and *second contexts*. Briefly, by this I mean the identification of both accepted and emergent 'high points' on a global scale, and seen within their special or first contexts; and secondly, the frame within which this knowledge or awareness is handled in a new context. Established educational practice, on the one hand, enables us to learn how to handle elements of the material world, substances and media like paint, clay, wood, plastic, cloth, etc. We acquire facility with the materials, we learn to 'know' them and are able to control and manage them. On the other hand, the empirical process of controlling and managing media is nearly always subordinate to some larger purpose or intention.[1] It is this all-important relationship of technical expertise to purpose or intention in production of an object within a particular culture at a particular time, that could be described for our purposes as the *first context*. It is within this first context that we find the meanings, both private and public, that constitute the intelligibility of art, craft or designed objects. Simply it might be thought of as the 'why' things are the way they are in particular times, places or cultures.[2]

However, in a modern developed industrial society we are aware of both past and future, and of the rest of the world, albeit in a somewhat

patchy way. Our individual awareness of the world *now*, as an organic complex of countless interrelated contexts constitute the *second context*. The foodstuffs in our shops today provide a very obvious example of this eclectic process. They vary from the almost 'contextless' prepacked instant variety to first context basic ingredients which come with a strong flavour of culture and demand specific knowledge if they are to satisfy our appetites!

This need to look outwards as well as inwards, is at best natural; is nurtured through the educative process, and is a central concern of the arts and sciences. We also might have occasion to regret or deplore some forms of cultural domination that have destroyed more fragile but legitimate expressions of peoples and their cultures. The balances at work in our contemporary second context, especially in relation to the arts and crafts of the third world, involving types of commercial iconoclasm and cultural development, are subtle and complex.[3]

As teachers, our viewpoint is from that of a relatively mobile industrialized society, and from that very fact stems our ability to look outwards to wider cultural references. At the same time we know that as human beings we have always utilized where possible preceding and neighbouring cultures, except maybe in the case of totally isolated tribal people, and have borrowed, assimilated, adapted, appropriated, developed and modified what they come in contact with.

In our schools subtlety and sensitivity of approach is also implicit in this suggested combination of the 'knowing of' materials and processes, and of the 'knowing about' the social or cultural context in which things have existed or still exist.

When the art, craft or design teacher introduces a wider spectrum of examples of objects or processes from what I have called the first context situations, a number of outcomes may occur:

1. the examples might remain embedded in their first context and appear only as exotic specimens of something 'out there' and have no relevance for the learner.

2. they could be copies, either superficially, or, much better, with an emphasis on enquiry and discovery.

3. they could be analyzed and recreated in new ways appropriate to available facilities and materials, and thus to modify the meaning and form.

If we take the second and third outcomes we have an opportunity to redefine some of our aims and intentions and to place emphasis on adaptive strategies. By this I mean the encouragement of outward-looking disciplined enquiry based on activity that seeks to develop both informed and critical response to what might initially appear unusual, different and apparently irrelevant.

One example from a West Midlands comprehensive school project on portrait pots illustrates this strategy. The teacher introduced the heritage of Peruvian pre-Columbian pottery, with particular reference to the Moche portrait vessels.[4] The pupils became intrigued by the idea that much of our knowledge of this ancient people, their appearance, character, diseases, statuses, etc., have come to us via these clay objects. They were imaginatively excited by the time capsule element and by the fact of baked clay as evidence, and were able to place the original objects in an historical/cultural context. They then went on to create their own very different self-portraits in the form of ceramic heads.

The project illustrates through the quality of the finished work the intensity of involvement marked through the imaginative use of adaptation of cultural precedent, and also that these second year pupils of three ethnic backgrounds used as a reference point another culture to which they reacted both positively and creatively. It is encouraging that the use of this approach - the creative application of wider resources - is happening in the older primary classes and throughout the secondary range. Gradually more scope is available within the examination system[6,7] and for extended project work for non-examination groups. Subject and interest areas such as social education, general studies, the humanities, home economics and English as a second language are using the materials produced as a base for constructing curricula.

Finally, it would seem that from a viewpoint located somewhere near the centre of the art, craft, design spectrum, that reference and attention to both the contexts outlined can, and in fact do, provide conceptual structures for experiencing in terms of the imaginative, the inventive, the aesthetic and the emotional.

NOTES

1. Pottery Cultures Handbook, *Ashanti and Hausa Pottery*, Birmingham Polytechnic, p. 30.

2. Ethnographic Resources for Art Education *Playthings as Art Objects*, Brierley, "Dolls", Birmingham Polytechnic, p.6.

3. Ethnographic Resources for Art Education *Dyed and Printed Textiles*, "Dutch wax prints", Birmingham Polytechnic, pp.2-5.

4. Pottery Cultures Handbook, *Pottery from Peru.*

5. B. Chalkley, *Education for International Understanding in the United Kingdom: A study of the syllabuses of the G.C.E. and C.S.E. examination boards to assess their international content*, Occasional Paper, II, Extramural Division, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1982.

6. A. Leary, *Assessment in a Multicultural Society: Art and Design*, Schools Council/Longmans, February, 1984.

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